

Testimony for Raised Bill No. 7366

An Act Concerning School Based Health Clinics and Community Health Centers

I want to thank the legislators for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of the recommendation provide for a substantial increase in funding for support of school based health centers in Connecticut. The City of Hartford, with grant funding from the Department of Public Health, operates Connecticut's largest school based health services program. We have comprehensive services in all three of our largest high schools, three of our four middle schools, and several elementary schools in the City of Hartford.

These Centers, particularly the high school programs, are essentially the major source of care for our adolescent and young adult population. This population rarely seeks primary preventative care through their primary provider, but instead utilize the Emergency Departments of the major hospitals for their acute care and often primary care needs.

Schools Based health centers offer this primary, preventative, and acute care in an efficient and cost-effective manner. These health centers are staffed by nurse practitioners and nurses who have special experience and training in the care of these adolescents. In addition, school-based health centers offer both individual and family counseling right in the school.

The presence of the school based health centers greatly contributes to a decrease in absenteeism because we are there to provide supportive care to keep the adolescent in school. Our work in the area of reproductive health is significant and has resulted in decreasing numbers of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy in our young adults.

Expansion of school based health centers would focus additional monies on services that already are well-identified as efficient and easy to access. The key to provision of health care to adolescents is the ease of access to care. Adolescents operate very much in the here and now, and are not historically big on prevention. However, since we have a captive audience in the school population, we are able to provide much of that prevention in our school setting.

Our school based health services have demonstrated the effectiveness of school based care and expansion of these services might help to eliminate costs associated with the inappropriate use of Emergency Departments statewide. I would urge you to provide this funding so that more adolescents and children can access the primary preventative care we all take for granted.

Sincerely,



Kurt J. Myers, M.D.